Azra Džino

Eng101

Prof. Kingsley

10/28/08

Leonardo da Vinci

Leonardo da Vinci. A scientist, artist, inventor, engineer, the ultimate Renaissance Man, whose name echoes through the ages. Though he was a talented man, he was most acclaimed for his art work , his ideas influenced future inventors, and technology. His artwork is timeless, to this day, people are still interpreting his artwork, above all is the Mona Lisa, who attracted 86,000,000 million people to the Louvre, in 2004 (www.ibiblio.org). Two of his most famous works will be discussed and analyzed, it is through these two art works that Da Vinci had made a big social impact.

Leonardo di ser Piero da Vinci was born April 15th, 1452 in Vinci, Italy. Over the course of his lifetime, he worked as an architect, a musician, an anatomist, an inventor, an engineer, a sculptor, a geometer and a painter. Most famous for the Mona Lisa and The Last Summer, da Vinci was a perfectionist whose scientific genius was captured in notebooks which have found their way into major museums such as Louvre, the Biblioteca Nacional de España, the British Library…. He died as a bachelor, on May 2, 1519 in France.

He was a man who did not seem to fit in his time. He had made discoveries of the world and in science that were not accepted. He invented the scissors, he realized that the Earth was “but a speck” ([www.library.thinkquest.org](http://www.library.thinkquest.org/)) in the universe. He conceived of the telescope 100 years before it was invented. Da Vinci designed a parachute 100 years before Croatian Faust Vrancic, and he dismissed the idea that the sun orbited the earth. He was not accepted as a scientist, though to this day, people are studying his scientific notebooks. Experts study and translate his writings, analyze his paintings using scientific techniques, argue over attributions and search for works which have been recorded but never found. Liana Bortolon, in her writing in 1967, said: "Because of the multiplicity of interests that spurred him to pursue every field of knowledge ... Leonardo can be considered, quite rightly, to have been the universal genius par excellence, and with all the disquieting overtones inherent in that term. Man is as uncomfortable today, faced with a genius, as he was in the 16th century. Five centuries have passed, yet we still view Leonardo with awe” ([www.vrmag.org/issue16](http://www.vrmag.org/issue16)).

The Mona Lisa transformed painting. The pose of the lady broke traditional full length portraits, Da Vinci introduced the waist-up, hands folded on the lap method, which allowed for a much more personal treatment. Mona Lisa the most famous painting in the world, at this time. The most talked about part of the picture – is the smile, the smile of the Mona Lisa has been called sweet, divine, perfidious, mocking, sinuous, serpentine, doubting, licentious, Epicurean, deliciously tender, ardent, sad, provocative, ineffable, cruel, sybilline voluptuous, uncertain, enigmatic, satanic, symptomatic, symbolic and more ( [www.seaburyhall.org](http://www.seaburyhall.org/)). Through his work, and even after his death, Leonardo da Vinci has been provoking people, by the smile of Mona Lisa, people have died not being able to analyze his work correctly, French artist, Luc Maspero, threw himself out of the 4th floor window of his Paris hotel, leaving a farewell note that said, "For years I have grappled desperately with her smile. I prefer to die" ([www.seaburyhall.org](http://www.seaburyhall.org/)). The Mona Lisa is famous more than other paintings because it was more open to interpretation than other paintings at that time. The painting affects us by what we believe it means. People’s belief leads them to see what they think is there, and everyone’s belief is different there fore there are many interpretations of the smile, and whole painting of the Mona Lisa. Unless some new evidence proves who Mona Lisa is, and what the smile means, and solves all the mysteries that are Mona Lisa, for years to come, the painting will continue to promote unprovable interpretations. Da Vinci believed that looking at a painting, was like looking through a window, he also said, that the key to painting is taking in information from all five senses, in that way, the painting portrays a bigger, and deeper meaning.

Another famous art piece by Leonardo Da Vinci is called *Last Supper*. The painting represents the biblical story of the last meal shared by Jesus with his apostles before his capture. It demonstrates specifically the moment when Jesus has said "one of you will betray me". Leonardo tells the story of the effect this statement had on the twelve apostles. People are still interpreting his work, and finding new things, like the fact that the Last Supper includes a woman as one of his apostles. A finding like this opens up many new doors and can rewrite parts of history and questions arise. Who is she? Why is she there? And What is her relationship to Jesus? Many people have concluded that the woman was Mary Magdalene. People question what Leonardo Da Vinci meant by that, to have a woman at his table, a woman who was pronounced as a heretic by the church, and whose gospel was thrown out by the church and for the most part is lost in time. Nowadays the painting has been reproduced and imitated in art and photography. Edelson with the help of Georgia O’Keeffe, reproduced the composition in *“Some Living American Women Artists/Last Supper.”* Though the painting has not puzzled art viewers as much as the Mona Lisa, it has made them question Da Vinci’s motives behind the art work. It is interesting that the people have not questioned the case of Mary Magdalene back in 1498, but have accepted it to be a man, and only in the 19th century have art viewers questioned and considered there to be a woman at the table. And only then have they started questioning the meaning of the art piece and why Da Vinci had painted that way. A model that looked like a woman, but dressed like a man, and the question remains why Da Vinci painted it like that, was it simply for interpretation purposes or was he suggesting something?

Leonardo Da Vinci was a man of remarkable talent. As an engineer, Leonardo's ideas were vastly ahead of his time. As a scientist, he was not taken seriously, and scientist disregarded his ideas. As an artist he has made an impact in the field. Giorgio Vasari summarizes Da Vinci in his book, *Lives of the Artists,*

In the normal course of events many men and women are born with remarkable talents; but occasionally, in a way that transcends nature, a single person is marvellously endowed by Heaven with beauty, grace and talent in such abundance that he leaves other men far behind, all his actions seem inspired and indeed everything he does clearly comes from God rather than from human skill. Everyone acknowledged that this was true of Leonardo da Vinci, an artist of outstanding physical beauty, who displayed infinite grace in everything that he did and who cultivated his genius so brilliantly that all problems he studied he solved with ease.

Da Vinci excelled at everything he did, he has succeeded in science, music, art, engineering, etc, though he was famously acclaimed for his art work. To this day Da Vinci is viewed with awe, and though he has passed away for hundred of years, he is still provoking and frustrating people around the world with his paintings, with his legacy. He was the first man to come up with the idea of a parachute, an airplane, and other things that to this day haven’t been found.

He was described as the archetype of the Renaissance man, knowledgeable, and talented in every field that the world had to offer. He looked at the world differently, and did not accept the ‘thinking’ of his time. He foreshadowed the inventions of the future, and though they were not accepted then, he is known as the man who started it all. He did not do anything that was traditionally accepted. He demonstrates this through two of his most acclaimed paintings – the Mona Lisa and Last Supper. In both of the paintings, he did not take the traditional accepted path. Mona Lisa was a painting from the waist up, which has never been done before, until Da Vinci decided to paint like that. In addition, he portrayed the woman with no facial hair, no eyelashes, and no eyebrows. The Last Supper – painting of Jesus and his apostles, Jesus is not directly in the middle. It is a very suspicious and sensitive subject to the church, whether or not there was a woman at his table sitting on his right side. His artwork has been questioned and studied, for a long time after his death, and to this day, people are mystified with the work of this largely talented man, known as Leonardo Da Vinci.

Work Cited

Renaissance Art. “Last Supper Da Vinci.” May 2000. <http://www.seaburyhall.org/library/RenaissanceArt/lastsupperdavinci.jpg>

Leonardo Da Vinci. Mary Lewis. April 2001. [www.vrmag.org/issue16](http://www.vrmag.org/issue16)

Leonardo Da Vinci, Biography. [www.ibiblio.org](http://www.ibiblio.org/)

library.thinkquest.org